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Conference Abstract

Making Biodiversity Data Social, Shareable, and Scalable: Reflections on iNaturalist & citizen science

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Abstract

Since 2008, iNaturalist has been crowdsourcing identifications for biodiversity observations collected by citizen scientists. Today iNaturalist has over 25 million records of wild biodiversity with photo or audio evidence, from every country, representing more than 230,000 species, collected by over 700,000 people, and with 90,000 people helping others with identifications. Hundreds of publications have used iNaturalist data to advance research, conservation, and policy. There are three key themes that iNaturalist has embraced: social interaction; shareability of data, tools, and code; and scalability of the platform and community. The keynote will share reflections on what has (and has not) worked for iNaturalist while drawing on other examples from biodiversity informatics and citizen science. Insights about user motivations, synergistic collaborations, and strategic decisions about scaling offer some transferable approaches to address the broadly applicable questions: Which species is represented? How do we make the best use of the available biodiversity information? And how do we build something viable and enduring in the process?

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Keywords

social networks, citizen science, occurrence records, crowdsourcing, scaling, data use, data quality

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